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REGIONAL COOPERATION

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia held its sixteenth session in Amman from 30 August to 3 September 1992. The present addendum contains resolutions adopted by the Commission that require action by the Economic and Social Council or are brought to its attention.

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MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

A. Matters calling for action by the Council

1. At its sixteenth session, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia approved the following draft resolutions for submission to the Council for action:

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

Frequency of sessions of the Technical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling resolution 158 (XIV) of 5 April 1987 of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on holding the sessions of the Commission on a biennial basis, 1/

Recalling also that in that resolution the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, was requested to prepare, in those years in which no session of the Commission was held, a detailed report on the activities, plans and programmes of the Commission for submission to the Economic and Social Council,

Persuaded of the desirability of annual consultations among States members of the Commission on issues of concern,

Convinced that such consultations could be achieved through meetings of the Technical Committee in years in which no session of the Commission is held,

Bearing in mind the administrative, financial and programme planning rules and regulations of the United Nations,

Decides that sessions of the Technical Committee shall be held in years in which no Commission session is held, starting with a three-day meeting in 1993, on the understanding that such meetings will be financed within the budgetary provisions currently applicable.

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1987, Supplement No. 15 (E/1987/35), chap. IV.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

Establishment of a Statistical Committee within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Council,

Realizing the importance of coordinating statistical work at the regional level and of standardizing statistical methods and concepts in accordance with the circumstances and potentials of the countries of the region covered by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and their economic and social development requirements, which induced other United Nations regional commissions to establish standing statistical committees to undertake the coordination of statistical work in their regions,

Aware of the necessity of supporting the participation of the statistical organizations of States members of the Commission in planning and developing statistical activities and in identifying the priority of statistical plans and programmes in the regions,

Aware also of the need to strengthen coordination and integration with regard to statistical policies, programmes and activities between regional Arab organizations and the Commission, with a view to meeting the needs and requirements of statistical organizations in member States and to developing those organizations in order to achieve the economic and social development goals of the countries of the region,

Noting that the meetings of heads of central statistical organizations of the States members of the Commission, held in 1985, 1987 and 1989, have proved effective in directing, coordinating and evaluating the statistical programmes of the Commission and in associating them with the statistical programmes and activities of regional Arab organizations and of member States,

Stressing the need for meetings of heads of central statistical organizations of member States to assume a permanent institutional form,

1. Decides to establish a Statistical Committee comprising representatives of the central statistical organizations of States members of the Commission to undertake the following activities:

(a) To familiarize itself with the statistical activities of the States members of the Commission and to follow up the progress made in those countries in the development of their statistical programmes, drawing up recommendations regarding the status, implementation and evaluation of programmes of statistical work and organizing symposiums, workshops and seminars related to statistics;

(b) To study international statistical systems, classifications and projects, adapting them to suit the conditions and priorities of the countries of the region;

(c) To provide advice on the statistical training requirements of States members of the Commission, proposing training programmes in coordination with appropriate regional institutions as needed;

(d) To standardize national statistics to make them more comparable at regional and international levels, taking into consideration relevant recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission and other appropriate bodies;

(e) To coordinate the exchange of statistical data and information between the Commission and its member States for the benefit of all concerned;

(f) To coordinate the statistical programmes of States members of the Commission, in particular in matters relating to statistical surveys and censuses and dates of implementation;

2. Recommends that the Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia meet biennially;

3. Calls upon the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to follow up the present resolution and to submit to the Commission at its seventeenth session a report on the achievements of the Statistical Committee.

DRAFT RESOLUTION III

Permanent headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Council,

Referring to the request submitted by the Government of Lebanon regarding the transfer and hosting of the permanent headquarters of the Commission in Beirut,

Referring also to the memorandum of the Government of Iraq, containing a request that the staff of the Commission return to Baghdad by 31 December 1992, failing which the Government would take back the present buildings, but would be prepared to provide other buildings for the same purpose,

Referring to the request submitted by the Government of Jordan regarding the transfer and hosting of the permanent headquarters of the Commission in Amman,

Referring to the note by the Executive Secretary concerning the permanent headquarters of the Commission, 2/

2/ E/ESCWA/16/11.

Taking into consideration the need to provide stability for the secretariat of the Commission, which is vital for the performance of the tasks entrusted to it,

1. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Commission to take the necessary measures to study the requests submitted by the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Jordan, as well as any other request that may be received from any State member of the Commission regarding the transfer and hosting of the permanent headquarters of the Commission, and also requests the Executive Secretary to submit to the Commission at its special session a detailed report on the contacts he makes with regard to the Commission's permanent headquarters, containing an appraisal of the offers made in that respect;

2. Decides that a special session of the Commission shall be held in Beirut within one year of the date of the adoption of the present resolution to discuss the question of the permanent headquarters of the Commission;

3. Expresses its appreciation to the Government of Lebanon for its offer to act as host for the special session of the Commission and for being prepared to meet the expenses involved;

4. Expresses its thanks to the Government of Iraq, as the present host of the Commission, for the facilities it has provided and is providing to the Commission, and appeals to that Government to consult with the Executive Secretary of the Commission before taking any measures related to buildings allocated for the permanent headquarters of the Commission in Baghdad in the light of the agreement concluded between the United Nations and the Republic of Iraq on the headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, signed in Baghdad on 13 June 1979;

5. Expresses its thanks to the Government of Jordan for hosting the Commission on a temporary basis since August 1991 and for providing it with all the necessary facilities.

B. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

2. Also at its sixteenth session, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia adopted a number of resolutions that are brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council. The relevant paragraphs of those resolutions are summarized below.

Regional cooperation and coordination in the field of environment and sustainable development

In resolution 180 (XVI), the Commission endorsed the Arab Declaration on Environment and Development and Future Prospects adopted by the Arab Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development, by which the results of the Conference were incorporated in the work and programmes of the Commission;

called for the establishment of an inter-agency coordinating committee on environment and development for the ESCWA region that would bring together concerned agencies and bodies for the purpose of promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 21; and reiterated the appeal, contained in paragraph 7 of its resolution 165 (XV) of 18 May 1989, to funding institutions, regional and international agencies, and countries in a position to do so, to provide financial support in order to enable the secretariat to implement regional and subregional environmental projects and to render assistance to member countries in identifying, analysing, monitoring, preventing and overcoming environmental problems.

Support for the Regional Household Survey Project in the ESCWA countries

In resolution 181 (XVI), the Commission stressed the importance of continuing the services provided by the secretariat in the field of household surveys; invited the Executive Secretary to exert efforts with various United Nations, Arab and international organizations to provide the necessary financial resources to ensure continuity of the Regional Household Survey Project; and requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report to the Commission at its next session.

Reconstruction and rehabilitation decade for Western Asia

By resolution 182 (XVI), the Commission, after noting with deep concern the devastating effects of man-made destruction and natural disasters on economic and social conditions, growth and development prospects, the environment and ecological systems, and of the massive dislocation of population and labour on countries of Western Asia, and being aware of the magnitude of the task of reconstruction which went beyond the capabilities of the countries concerned, declared the period 1994-2003 as a reconstruction and rehabilitation decade for Western Asia; requested the secretariat, in close coordination with concerned regional and international organizations, to intensify efforts aimed at promoting regional cooperation in the area of reconstruction, rehabilitation and manpower; and requested the Executive Secretary to prepare and submit to the Commission at its seventeenth session a report on the possibilities of establishing a fund for reconstruction and development in the region.

Reconstruction of Lebanon

In resolution 183 (XVI), the Commission called upon the Executive Secretary to intensify his efforts to provide the necessary funds from the Commission's regular budgetary and extrabudgetary sources in order to meet expenses of development activities agreed upon in the memorandum of understanding with the Council for development and reconstruction of Lebanon; and requested its member States and appropriate Arab, regional and international funds to support the efforts of the Executive Secretary in that respect.

Economic and social conditions of the Palestinian Arab people

In resolution 184 (XVI), the Commission called for support for the secretariat's activities which embodied studies, consultancies, workshops, seminars and conferences concerned with the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian Arab people and economic development projects in the occupied Palestinian territories; and also called for the strengthening of the role of the Commission in technical activities falling within its terms of reference and for participation, within United Nations organs, in technical activities, particularly those related to regional issues in areas of peace, after consulting with member States involved in the peace negotiations.

Economic and social conditions of the Syrian people under Israeli occupation in the occupied Syrian Golan

In resolution 185 (XVI), the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to submit to it, at its next session, a comprehensive study on the economic and social conditions of Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan, including an account of economic and social conditions since the Israeli occupation in 1967 and an analysis of the impact of arbitrary Israeli policies and practices on economic, social, living and demographic conditions.

Preparations for the International Year of the Family, 1994

In resolution 186 (XVI), the Commission, being mindful that the International Year of the Family would provide a good opportunity for mobilizing efforts at national and regional levels, appealed to member States to exert all possible efforts to promote awareness of the role of the family as a fundamental unit of society in furthering economic and social development in the region; and urged member States as well as international donors to provide the secretariat with the necessary financial and other means of support needed to convene a regional preparatory meeting involving governmental and non-governmental organizations during 1993, in preparation for the International Year of the Family.

World summit for social development

In resolution 187 (XVI), the Commission, after taking into account the note by the Secretary-General on the world summit for social development (E/1992/80), in which it was stressed that the summit would provide leadership at the highest level for a shared world-wide commitment to putting people at the centre of development and international cooperation, endorsed Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/27 of 30 July 1992 on social development; and requested the Executive Secretary to represent the concerns of the people of Western Asia through the Commission's active involvement in the summit and in all preparatory steps.

Preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace

In resolution 188 (XVI), the Commission stressed the need to strengthen national and regional institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; and appealed to States members of the Commission as well as to regional and international donors to provide the secretariat with the financial and other support needed to convene a regional preparatory meeting during 1994 for the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in September 1995, including the establishment of national focal points to initiate and promote preparations for the Conference.

Arab Population Conference, 1993

In resolution 189 (XVI), the Commission, after recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/93 of 26 July 1991, particularly paragraph 10, in which the regional commissions were invited to convene as soon as possible meetings or conferences to review the experience gained in population policies and programmes in their regions, after taking into consideration the agreement between the secretariat of the Commission, the secretariat of the League of Arab States and the United Nations Population Fund to jointly convene the Arab Population Conference in Amman from 4 to 8 April 1993, after acknowledging with appreciation the contributions of the parties involved in that agreement and after recognizing that the overall objective of the 1993 Arab Population Conference was to adopt, in preparation for the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, a common position regarding population issues, requested member States to actively participate in the Arab Population Conference by, inter alia, ensuring a high level of representation and making substantive contributions to that Conference at the national level.

Impact of the establishment of the single European market on the countries of the region of Western Asia

In resolution 190 (XVI), the Commission called upon the Executive Secretary to prepare detailed studies in priority areas on the impact of the establishment of the single European market on the countries of the region; stressed the necessity, in preparing those studies, of cooperating and coordinating with the regional and international organizations and institutions concerned; and called upon member States and funding institutions in the region to provide the necessary resources for the preparation of those studies.

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

In resolution 191 (XVI), the Commission expressed its appreciation of the manner in which its secretariat had addressed the obstacles encountered as a result of recent events in the region; reiterated its conviction that the Commission had a central role to play within the United Nations system and in coordination with other entities concerned to improve economic and social conditions in the region; recommended that its potential for coordinating, initiating and carrying out development activities for the benefit of member States be strengthened; and also recommended that in the restructuring currently under way, the following objectives be made part of the process:

(a) Decentralization of those activities that could be more effectively undertaken by the regional commissions;

(b) Improvement of the coordination of development carried out by parties inside and outside the United Nations system;

(c) Promoting joint programming of the activities of the United Nations involving the regional commissions and active participation of the regional commissions in the programming and budgeting process;

(d) Strengthening the role of regional commissions as executing agencies for regional and subregional technical cooperation projects.

Work of the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

In resolution 193 (XVI), the Commission commended the efforts made by the secretariat to continue its work during the Gulf crisis, in spite of the effects of the crisis on the normal progress of work; and stressed the need for member States to support the Commission's efforts, which aimed at advancing the process of economic and social development in the region.

Medium-term plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for the period 1992-1997

In resolution 194 (XVI), the Commission took note of the first revision of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997; approved the amendments recommended by the Technical Committee at its seventh session; and requested the Executive Secretary to inform the Technical Committee, at its eighth session, of developments with regard to the second revision of the plan in the light of observations made thereon by the Commission.

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993

By resolution 195 (XVI), the Commission approved the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, as amended in the light of observations made thereon by the Technical Committee; and requested the Executive Secretary to bring to the attention of the Technical Committee, at its eighth session, the proposed modification of the programme budget.